

SELF CARE

Diet and Exercise: Healthy Balance for a Healthy Heart

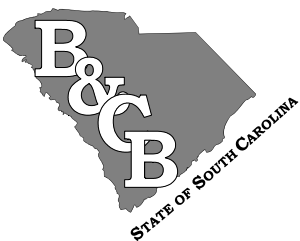
The food you eat can affect the way blood flows through your heart and arteries. A diet high in fat and cholesterol can gradually cause a plaque buildup in your arteries that can slow down blood flow and even block small arteries. If the blockage happens in an artery that carries blood to the heart muscle, the heart muscle can die. That's a heart attack. If the blockage happens in an artery that carries blood to the brain, part of the brain can die. That's a stroke (also called a brain attack). The right diet helps keep your arteries clear and reduces the risk of heart problems and stroke. Keeping your heart healthy by watching what you eat isn't as hard as it sounds!

Tips for a heart-healthy diet

1. Eat less fat (especially butter, coconut and palm oil, saturated or hydrogenated vegetable fats like lard, animal fats in meats, fats in dairy products).
2. Use nonstick vegetable oil cooking sprays instead of the oils.
3. Buy lean cuts of meat; reduce portion size to 3 ounces (the size of a pack of cards).
4. Eat more fish, skinless chicken and turkey.
5. Try low-fat snacks (baked chips instead of fried; vegetable sticks).
6. Buy sherbet, ice milk or frozen low-fat yogurt instead of ice cream.
7. Bake, broil, steam or grill foods instead of frying them.
8. Eat fewer "fast foods" (burgers, fried foods), which are high in fat.

Why is exercise good for my heart?

Exercise makes your heart stronger, helping it pump more blood with each heartbeat. More blood delivers more oxygen to your body. Exercise can also lower blood pressure, reduce your risk of heart disease and reduce levels of LDL ("bad" cholesterol), which clogs the arteries and can cause a heart attack. At the same time, exercise can raise levels of HDL ("good" cholesterol), which helps protect against heart disease.



STATE HEALTH PLAN PREVENTION PARTNERS
South Carolina Budget and Control Board
Employee Insurance Program
September 2002

